

## Bait-al-Sha'ar: A Kuwaiti Traditional Bedouin Mobile Home at Risk

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### Abstract

Bait-al-Sha'ar is the mobile home tent of the Bedouin tribes living in Kuwait's arid desert land. This eco-friendly nomad structure has been in use for hundreds of years among the Bedouin tribes inhabiting the Arabian Peninsula. However, Bait-al-Sha'ar is in danger of extinction due to the massive and increasing migration of Bedouin populations from its desert land to the different Kuwaiti cities and suburbs. As a result, it became quite essential to study and document the original structure of Bait-al-Sha'ar, as well as, all its external and internal soft and hard parts, furniture, and decorations.

This study aims to: 1) identify the different types and sources of raw materials, dyes, and fixatives used in Al-Sadu textiles to construct, furnish, and decorate Bait-al-Sha'ar, 2) explore the different weaving techniques used in Al-Sadu weavings, 3) identify the major characteristics of Al-Sadu weavings, which make them suitable for constructing, furnishing, and decorating Bait-al-Sha'ar, 4) study the original design and structure of the Bait-al-Sha'ar, 5) name and explain the different parts and items used in constructing, furnishing, and decorating Bait-al-Sha'ar, and 6) explain the way Bait-al-Sha'ar is constructed and deconstructed.

Thirty seven (37) interior design and art students studying "Kuwait Artistic Heritage" course at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait helped in collecting all the needed data for this study by interview their elderly, family members, relatives, friends, and others. Two A3 size internal and external images of Bait-al-Sha'ar were used identify the names of the different internal and external parts of Bait-al-Sha'ar. The collected data was cross analyzed with each other to determine similarities and differences in naming the studied parts.

It is recommended that more research should be done to identify similarities and differences between the different Bedouin tribes in Kuwait in naming the different external and internal parts of Bait-al-Sha'ar, as well as, its furniture and decorations.

**Key words:** Bait-al-Sha'ar, Mobile Home, Bedouin, Kuwait, Desert

### ملخص البحث

بيت الشعر هو المنزل المتنقل للقبائل البدوية التي تعيش على الأراضي الصحراوية القاحلة في دولة الكويت. هذا الهيكل الصديق للبيئة يستخدم منذ مئات السنين بين القبائل البدوية التي استوطنت شبه الجزيرة العربية. ومع ذلك، فإن بيت الشعر يواجه خطر الانقراض بسبب الهجرة الهائلة والمتنامية للسكان البدو من أراضيهم الصحراوية إلى مختلف المدن والضواحي الكويتية. ونتيجة لذلك، أصبح من الضروري للغاية دراسة وتوثيق البناء والهيكل الأصلي لبيت الشعر، بالإضافة إلى دراسة جميع الأجزاء الداخلية والخارجية الصلبة وغير الصلبة والأثاث والديكورات المكونة له.

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى: (1) تحديد الأنواع المختلفة لمصادر المواد الخام والأصبغ والمثبتات المستخدمة في منسوجات السدو لبناء وتأثيث وتزيين بيت الشعر (2) استكشاف تقنيات النسيج المختلفة المستخدمة في منسوجات السدو، (3) تحديد الخصائص الرئيسية لمنسوجات السدو التي تجعلها مناسبة لبناء وتأثيث وتزيين بيت الشعر، (4) دراسة التصميم الأصلي لهيكل بناء بيت الشعر، (5) تسمية وشرح الأجزاء المختلفة والمواد المستخدمة في بناء وتأثيث وتزيين بيت الشعر، و (6) شرح الطريقة التي يتم من خلالها بناء وتفكيك بيت الشعر.

ساهم في هذه الدراسة عدد سبعة وثلاثون (37) من طلبة تخصصي التصميم الداخلي والتربية الفنية الذين يدرسون مقرر "التراث الفني الكويتي" في كلية التربية الأساسية في الكويت في جمع البيانات اللازمة لهذه الدراسة عن طريق إجراء مقابلات مع كبار السن وأفراد العائلة، والأقارب، والأصدقاء، وغيرهم. تم استخدام صورتين داخليتين وخارجيتين بحجم بيت الشعر لتحديد أسماء الأجزاء الداخلية والخارجية المختلفة لهذا للبيت. تم تحليل البيانات التي جمعت مع بعضها البعض لتحديد أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في تسمية الأجزاء المدروسة. يوصى الباحث بإجراء المزيد من الدراسات والأبحاث لتحديد أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين القبائل البدوية المختلفة في الكويت في تسمية الأجزاء الخارجية والداخلية المختلفة من بيوت الشعر، وقطع أثاثها وديكوراتها.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** بيت الشعر، بيت متنقل، البدو، الكويت، الصحراء

## Introduction

In the arid desert environment of Kuwait, Al-Sadu weavings play a major role in the lives of the Bedouin individuals, families, and tribes. Out of goat's hair, sheep's fleece, and camel hair, Bedouin women weave their desert mobile home tents of "Bait-al-Sha'ar" or "House of Hair" to provide their families with havens to shelter, as well as, places to rest in and protect themselves from the drastic climatic changes and challenges of Kuwait desert.

However, the lives of most Bedouin individuals, families, and tribes have changed over the years due to their massive migrations from Kuwait desert to its different cities and suburbs. As a result, the need for the continuation of the traditional way of constructing Bait-al-Sha'ar, its soft furniture, and decorations retreated to its lowest levels in decades. Instead, machine-made Al-Sadu textiles are replacing the traditional hand woven ones as the main soft constructing materials for the traditional Bait-al-Sha'ar, its furniture, and decorations. In addition, modern metal frame structures are currently utilized to meet the seasonal demand for Bait-al-Sha'ar and its furniture during the winter and spring annual camping seasons in the desert. The new designs and constructing materials are used to compete with the high prices of the traditional Bait-al-Sha'ar. As a result, it is becoming quite vital, and increasingly essential to study and document the design and construction materials of the original Bait-al-Sha'ar, its soft furniture, and decorations.

## Research Questions, Objectives, and Methodology

For thousands of years, man used animal skin and fibers to fulfill his different personal and family needs. Over fourteen (14) centuries ago, The Holy Quran came to tell all humankind in Surah (chapter) An-Nahl, verse (80) that:

"It is God Who made your habitations homes of rest and quiet for you; and made for you, out of the skins of animals, (tents for) dwellings, which ye find so light (and handy) when ye travel and when ye stop (in your travels); and out of their wool, and their soft fibers (between

wool and hair), and their hair, rich stuff and articles of convenience (to serve you) for a time.”

1

This verse from the Holy Quran identifies and documents the long history of human use of animal skins and fibers in home building and home furnishing. However, it is still unknown as when exactly people started using animal skin and fibers for home building and furnishing. Therefore, two important questions rise seeking satisfying answers. These questions are: 1) why animal fibers such as hair and wool were used as constructions and furnishing and decoration materials for the desert mobile home of Bait-al-Sha'ar? and 2) How animal fibers of hair and wool were used in Al-Sadu weavings to construct, furnish Bait-al-Sha'ar?

Therefore, the aim of this study is to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Identify the types and sources of raw materials, dyes, and fixatives used in Al-Sadu textiles to construct, furnish, and decorate Bait-al-Sha'ar.
2. Explore the different weaving techniques used in Al-Sadu weavings.
3. Identify the major characteristics of Al-Sadu weavings, which make them suitable for constructing, furnishing, and decorating Bait-al-Sha'ar.
4. Study the original design and structure of the Bait-al-Sha'ar.
5. Name and explain the different parts and items used in constructing, furnishing, and decorating Bait-al-Sha'ar.
6. Explain the way Bait-al-Sha'ar is constructed and deconstructed.

To answer the questions of this study and accomplish its objectives, two A3 size external and internal images of a traditional structure of Bait-al-Sha'ar were disseminated to thirty seven (37) male students who were studying an interior design course during the first fall semester of 2016-2017 academic year. The title of that course is “Kuwait Artistic Heritage”, and it was offered through the Interior Design program at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait. As a course assignment, the students agreed to help in identifying the different external and internal hard and soft parts of Bait-al-Sha'ar. The students interviewed their Kuwaiti elderly, relatives, friends, and others who came from different tribal backgrounds. Next, the collected data was cross analyzed with each other to identify similarities and difference in identifying and naming the studied external and internal hard and soft parts of Bait-al-Sha'ar.

## **Types and Sources of Raw Materials, Dyes, and Fixatives**

### **Used in Al-Sadu Weavings**

Out of necessity, the nomad people of Kuwait, who used to be called "Bedouins" and currently are called "The Sons of the Tribes", used special handmade woven textiles called Al-Sadu to build their mobile tent homes of "Bait-al-Sha'ar", and to construct most of their basic soft furnishing items, and decoration. The basic constructing materials used for the Al-Sadu weavings are the camel's hair, sheep's fleece, goat's hair.<sup>2, 3, 4, 5</sup> Camel's hair is often collected from the backs of camels; however, sheep's fleece and goat's hair are shaved during the spring season. Those animal fibers come in different colors such as off-white, gray, black, light and dark brown, to name few.

Only off-white sheep's fleece is hand-dyed with natural colors, found in local plants, after it is cleaned, carded, and spun into single yarns. Next each two yarns are twisted together to form one well-spun yarn. There are few major natural substances that are used by the Bedouins to extract natural dyes such as: onion skin, turmeric, safflower, madder roots, henna,

and indigo<sup>4</sup>. Safflower powder is used to make yellow dye baths, and Turmeric is often used only if other yellow coloring substances are hard to find or comparatively expensive to use. As for madder and henna, they are used independently to get different shades of red and brown respectively.

To fix natural dyes into off-white wool, the Al-Sadu Bedouin weavers learned to mix dry Arjoon, (Podaxis) with camel urine, and then the mixture is added to the dye bath as a natural mordent. In addition, alum, dried lime, pomegranate skin, and vinegar are used as natural and local mordents to improve the quality of the dyeing and fixation processes. Alum is often used as the main mordent, but because it is an alkali, it does not fix dyes on wool very well.<sup>4</sup>

The preparation of natural dye paths often take a long time and requires more caution. However, the results of those dyes often do not stand long exposure to sun light, and it often bleed when washed with water. As a result, Bedouin started using more of the chemical dyes, mainly imported from India, for faster result, and more color hues.

### **Types of Weaving Techniques Used in Al-Sadu Weavings**

There are four major types of weaving techniques, which are used by Al-Sadu master weavers. These technique include: 1) plain weaving, 2) warp face weaving, 3) pile weaving, and 4) tapestry weaving.

In the plain weaving technique, both the warp and weft yarns are shown on both front and back faces the woven textile. This technique is the simplest and fastest one in Al-Sadu weaving. Products of this weaving method are used as blankets or covers. However, in the warp face weaving only the warp yarns are showing, but the weft yarns are hidden between the warps. This weaving technique is quite durable and practical to weave the needed textiles for Bait-al-Sha'ar and most of its soft furniture and decorations.

The third technique is the pile weave, which is mainly used to make thick area rug called "Zoleyah". This area rug works as a good isolating material, and soft surface to protect the Bedouin's body from the coolness and dampness of the desert ground during wintertime. However, this types of woven product gets heaving in weight and it consumes a large amount of wool yarns. The fourth and last technique is the tapestry weave which is locally call "Raqoum". In this weaving technique, the warp yarns are covered by rapping them with the weft yarns. This technique is often used to finish many of the Al-Sadu weavings, which have decorative and utilitarian usages.

### **Major Characteristics of Al-Sadu Weavings**

The traditional handcraft of Al-Sadu weaving has been practiced in Kuwait for several centuries. It is a simple, yet a very creative and practical handcraft that does not require or need any modern machine to be practiced. It began long time ago even before the existence of the Bedouin tribes in Kuwait, and it kept growing then it started retreating when their lifestyle began changing.

There are few major characteristics to Al-Sadu weavings and weaving techniques that are associated with the Bedouins of Kuwait. These characteristics can best be described as the following:

1. They are woven out of local animal fibers, which are camel's hair, sheep's wool, and goat's hair. Those domestic animals are raised by the Bedouins for personal use and as a mean of determining wealth.
2. The used animal fibers are quite suitable for the local desert environment. Camel's hair, sheep's fleece, and goat's hair work as great isolating materials when used to weave the different parts of Bait-al-Sha'ar.
3. Goat's hair yarns are used to weave the roof of Bait-al-Sha'ar, and they serve their purpose very well. During the sunny, hot, and dry summer seasons, the warps and wefts of the roof of Bait-al-Sha'ar expand and loosen up leaving tiny holes between them for hot air touching the bottom of the roof to escape and open the way for a cooler breeze to get in Bait-al-Sha'ar. However, during the cold and rainy winter seasons, the warps and wefts of the roof of Bait-al-Sha'ar swill with water, get tightened together, and prevent rain from going through that roof.
4. All Al-Sadu textiles and weaving materials are quite friendly to the environment and completely sustainable.
5. All the goods that are made with Al-Sadu textiles are durable and portable, which make them quite practical and suitable for the desert mobile life of the Bedouin individuals, families, and tribes.
6. All Al-Sadu products are reparable when they are lightly damaged.
7. The undamaged camel's hair, sheep's wool, and goat's hair can always be reused in newer Al-Sadu products, when parts of their original products are damaged to a level beyond repair.

### **The Use of Al-Sadu Weavings as Constructing, Furnishing, and Decoration Materials**

By using, the previously mentioned four types of weaving techniques, Al-Sadu master weavers managed to weave their homes of Bait-al-Sha'ar as well as furnish and decorate it. They successfully used the local eco-friendly materials of the camel's hair, sheep's fleece, and goat's hair to fulfill their needs for the basic weaving materials and satisfy their family most needed and wanted demands for shelter and basic soft home furniture, and decorations.

### **Bait-al-Sha'ar**

To understand the philosophy behind the construction of the Bedouin tent "Bait-al-Sha'ar" (House of Hair), it is essential to understand the living conditions of the people of those tribes, and the nature of their inhibited desert environment. In addition, it is important to study their social system, their daily life habits and activities, and the methods through which they satisfy their basic living needs. For hundreds of years, the Bedouin people of Kuwait, as well as, the ones living the Arabian Peninsula migrated from one area to another looking for drinking water and grass. Those two items were quite essential for the continuation of human and animal lives in their arid environments.<sup>4,5</sup> As a result, the Bedouins were forced to construct their tent homes "Bait-al-Sha'ar" and all their furnishings and utilitarian items to be quite simple in design, highly functional, and light in weight for practical daily usage and easy mobilization. Therefore, the constructing materials, which were used to fulfill that specific need and requirement, had to serve both purposes.

In the same tribe, a group of Boyot-al-Sha'ar (plural for Bait-al-Sha'ar) that belong to the same family members and relatives are normally built at close distances from each other;

however, non-relatives build their homes at a farther distance. The chief of the tribe (the Sheik) builds his Bait-al-Sha'ar in the center surrounded by the wealthy and most prestigious families, while the poor members of the tribes live at the borders of the tribe's camp. The sheikh's Bait-al-Sha'ar is normally the largest one and its men's quarter is always open for the men of the tribe, and the guests.

In the spring of 1968, Maude De Schauensee <sup>6</sup> wrote in the "Expedition" regarding Bait-al-Sha'ar as an excellent example for a practical and completely portable home by saying:

"What is a Bedouin tent but an eminently practical and completely portable house demonstrating all the principle elements of permanent architecture. The tent has support for the roof at the four corners, at intervals along the sides and down at the center, as well as a roof and "curtain" or non-bearing walls. These walls, being literally curtains, have the advantage of being movable or completely removable at will depending on the desirability or the weather. The support are thin poles placed in holes in the ground. The roof consists of a covering of lightly woven black strips made of goats hair sewn together to create the desired length and width. The walls, also suspended from the roof support, are made in the same manner, but are often of light color and sometimes less tightly woven. These curtain walls are huge so they can be raised or lowered at a moment's notice, depending on whether they are needed to keep out the sun, wind, and dust, and sometimes rain, or for privacy. A very simple tent has no sub-divisions, being essentially all one room. But the more elaborate, though not necessarily larger, one is divided into two or more parts. The main division occurs more or less in the middle so that one part, which is sometimes smaller, can be used to receive and entertain visitors. The other part, whose walls seem never to be open up, is usually defined by a curtain of tightly woven strips of brightly colored geometric design sewn together to proper size. Sometimes, however this curtain and the walls of this end of the tent are replaced by a fence of reeds tied together by rope which does not reach all the way to the roof but shields the interior from view. The "apartment" thus formed is used for domestic chores, for sleeping, and as the place to which women and children retire should visitors arrive." (p. 32)

Although the design of Bait-al-Sha'ar may look quite simple; however, it is constructed out of several external and internal parts. Those parts are well thought off, and creatively put together to support the mobile structure and work in favor of this type of housing form. Thus, to understand the level of practicality, convenience, and sustainability of Bait-al-Sha'ar, it becomes quite important to study all its parts and uncover the purpose and use of each one of them in supporting this soft and mobile architectural structure.

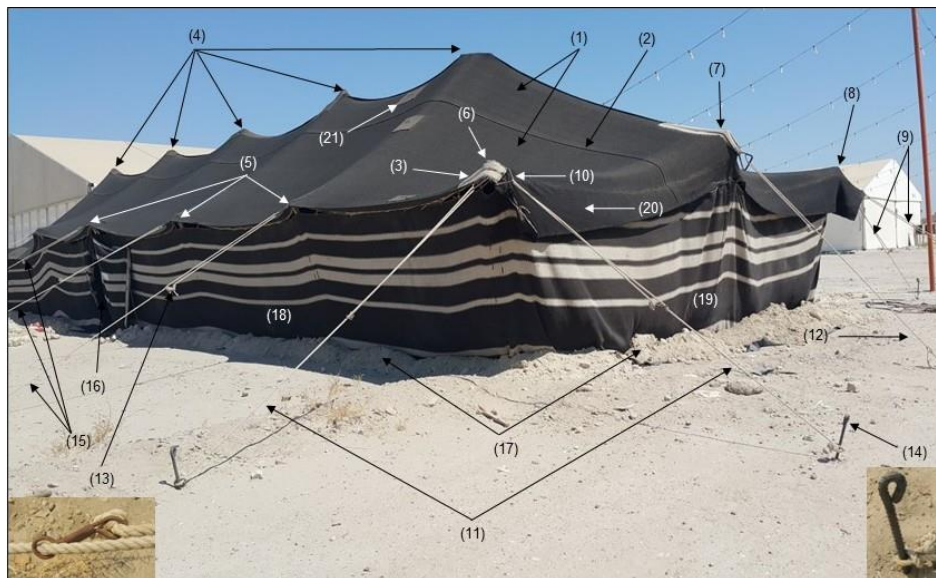
About 20 different external and internal parts help together in constructing the total structure of Bait-al-Sha'ar, and support it to stand tall in the face of the desert climatic changes. These parts are shown in figures (1 & 2), and they include:

**1) Fleej or Filjan (single is Filjah) or Shagayeg (single is Sheggah) of Al-Bait (roof strips):** these woven parts are black in color and made out of goat's hair. Each Filjah or Sheggah is 70-100 cm in width and 7-25 meters in length (Figure 1 #1). The roof of a small Bait-al-Sha'ar is sewn out of 6-8 Fleej were each one of them is about 7 meters in length and have three sets of three poles to support and raise the roof. The first set of three poles will be at the far right of Bait-al-Sha'ar, the second set of three poles will be at the far left side, and

the third set of three poles will raise the center of the roof. This type of Bait-al-Sha'ar with this roof structure is called "Qutbah". However, the roof of Bait-al-Sha'ar of the chief of the tribe "Sheikh Al-Qabealah" could go up to 25 meters in length and 6-8 meters in width. That size of roof could be supported by two set of three poles at both end of Bait-al-Sha'ar and seven set of three poles in between the two end. This Bait is called "Mesobaa" which means the Bait has "Sabaa" or seven (7) set of three poles in addition to the ones on both ends. In the roof of Bait-al-Sha'ar, small square openings are made with covers to allow cooking smoke to go through the roof. These opening are covered with the same roof material during rain time.

The main reasons for choosing black goats' hair fibers to construct the roof of Bait-al-Sha'ar were best explained by William McDonough <sup>7</sup> in his publication titled the "Environmentally Intelligent Textiles" by stating:

"With respect to membrane, we only have to look at the Bedouin tent to find a design that accomplishes five things at once. In the desert, temperatures often exceed 120 (Fahrenheit) degrees. There is no shade, no air movement. The black Bedouin tent, when pitched, creates a deep shade that brings one's sensible temperature down to 95 degrees. The tent has a very coarse weave, which creates a beautifully illuminated interior, having a million light fixtures. Because of the coarse weave and the black surface, the air inside rises and is drawn through the membrane. So now you have a breeze coming from outside and that drops the sensible temperature even lower, down to 90 degrees. You may wonder what happens when it rains, with those holes in the tent. The fibers swell up and the tent gets tight as drum when wet. In addition, of course, you can roll it up and take it with you. The modern tent pales by comparison to this astonishingly elegant construct." (pp.10-11).



**Figure (1):** Names of the different exterior parts of Bait-al-Sha'ar: 1) Fleej or Filjan or Shagayeg Al-Bait (roof strips), 2) the seem of sewing two Filjas together, 3) Tarrijah (webbing to strengthen Bait-al-Shaar against strain of ropes), 4) Emdan Waset Al-Bait (central poles), 5) Emdan Majadeem Al-Bait (front poles), 6) Amood Al-Ead or Amood Al-Kaser or Al-Turfah Al-Amamiah (front corner pole), 7) Amood A-Amer, 8) Amood Rijel or Amood Al-Kaser or Amood Al-Turfah Al-Khalfee (rear corner pole), 9) Atnab Al-Rijel Al-Aysar (rope of the left corner's pole), 10) Ritbah or Kherb, 11) Atnab Al-Ead Al-Aysar (rope

of the right corner's pole), 12) Tenb Al-Amer (Al-Amer's pole), 13) Mekrab Al-Tenb or Al-Ogedah, 14) Watad or Minsab (ten peg), 15) Atnab Al-Majadeem (front ropes), 16) Sheraa or Bab Al-Bait (entrance / exit), 17) Sefalah (the barred part of the Rowag and both Raffahs), 18) Sitar soft curtain wall that covers the front side of Bait al-Sha'ar, 19) Ruffah (side Rowag), 20) Kaser Al-Bait (the extended part of the roof), 21) Reqaah (patched roof).

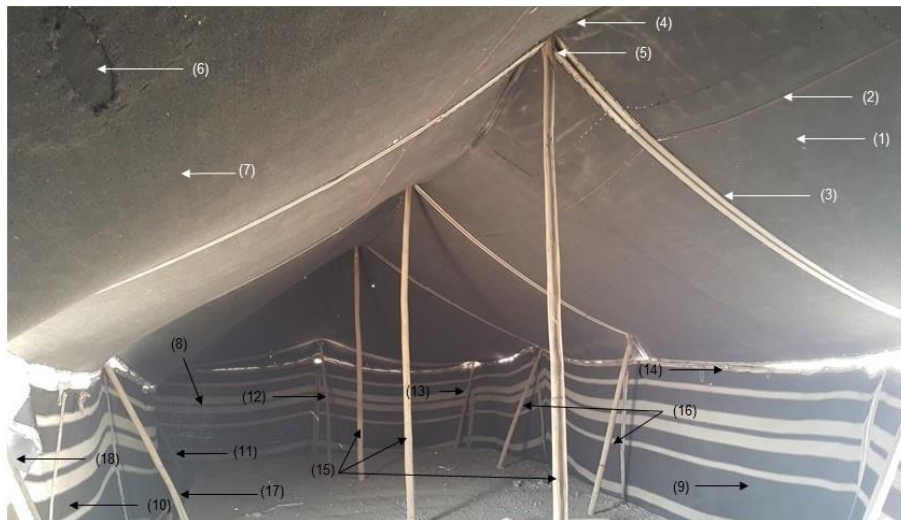
2) **Ruffah:** it is name for each of the two side wall curtains that stand on the right and left sides of Bait-al-Sha'ar (figure 1 #19 & figure 2 #8).

3) **Rewaq or Therah:** it is the rear soft curtain wall of Bait-al-Sha'ar (figure 2 #9).

4) **Sitar:** it is the front soft curtain wall for Bait-al-Sha'ar. This part of Bait-al-Sha'ar is used when the weather is cold or dusty. Also, the sitar is used when the members of the household need more privacy (figure 1 #18 & figure 2 #10).

The Ruffa, Rewaq, and Sitar are all woven out of black and off white sheep's wool. The black wool forms the backgrounds while the off white wool is woven as horizontal lines that are about 10 centimeters in width. The Sefalah (figure 1 #17) is the lower and the berried part of the Ruffah, Rewaq, and Sitar.

5) **Kaser:** it is the hanging out edges of the roof which that extends about twenty (20) centimeters to cover the top of the Ruffah, Rewaq, and Sitar (figure 1 #20).



**Figure (2):** Names of the different interior parts of Bait-al-Shaar: 1) Filjan or Shagayeg Al-Bait (roof strips), 2) the seem of sewing two Filjas together, 3) Tarrjah (webbing to strengthen Bait-al-Shaar against strain of ropes), 4) Gotbah or Getab (two pieces of wood sewn to the roof under the pole), 5) Athanee Amod Waset Al-Bait (the top part of the central pole), 6) Reqaah (patched roof), 7) the roof of Bait-al-Shaar, 8) Ruffah (side Rowag), 9) Rowag or Therah (rear soft curtain wall), 10) Sitar (front soft curtain wall), 11) Amod Al-Ead or Amod Al-Khaser or Al-Turfah Al-Amamiah (front corner pole), 12) Amod A-Amer, 13) Amod Rijel or Amod Al-Kaser or Amod Al-Turfah Al-Khalfee (rear corner pole), 14) Khelal (tiding ropes), 15) Emdan Waset Al-Bait (central poles), 16) Emdan Mekhar or Moaakher Al-Bait (rear side poles), 17) Amod Mogadam Al-Bait (front poles), 18) Sheraa or Bab Al-Bait (entrance / exit).

6) **Qatta, Ibjaad, or Sahah:** it is a dividing curtain wall that separates the men's section "Ruba'at-al-Rijal" from the women's section "Sheq-al-Hareem or Al-Haram" (figure 3). The



use of this divider helps to utilize the same Bait-al-Sha'ar for both family and social purposes. Both sections are separated with a long colorful and well-designed divider <sup>5, 8</sup>. The tent divider (Qatta) is often constructed of five long pieces of Al-Sadu weavings named from the top to the bottom as the following: 1) Al-Kuffah, 2) Al-Khadeer, 3) Al-Bgrah, 4) Al-Baij, and 5) Al-Sefalah (Al-Thafeeree, October 10, 2009). These five long pieces are sewn side-by-side with each other to form the Qatta, which is about nine to twelve (9–12) meters in length and two to two and one-half (2-2.5) meters in height. The first four top sections of the Qatta are often well decorated with beautiful abstract pictographs that run the entire length of the woven piece, while the last one that is touching the ground is often made plain. The running pictographs come in three different types of forms: 1) running plain colored with thin and thick lines, 2) boarder or inside repeated geometric patterns, 3) central collection of pictographic symbols or codes, which are, organized one after the other in what is called the “Shajarah” and “Mishojarah”.

**7) Awameed or Emdan or A'amedah (single is Amood) tent poles:** the roof of each Bait-al-Sha'ar regardless of its size is raised over wooden poles that are made of out trunks of the Tamarix (Athel) or Acacia (Sint or Taleh) trees with lengths between two and three (2-3) meters and 10-15 centimeters in diameter (figures 1 #4 & #5, figure 2 #11-13, #15-17). Normally the poles in the center of Bait-al-Sha'ar are three (3) meters long, but the ones in the front or rear sides of Bait-al-Sha'ar are two (2) meters long. These tent poles are used to raise and support the roof of Bait-al-Shaar, and they are placed under it in sets of three pole. The sets of three poles that are located at the right and left side of Bait-al-Sha'ar are called “Emdan-al-Tawaref” (figure 1 #6-8 & figure 2 #11-13), which have different names than the rest of other poles. The front pole is called “Yad-al-Bait” or “Al-Tarfah Al-Amameyah”, which means the arm of the tent (figure 1 #6 & figure 2 #11). The rear pole is called “Rijil-al-Bait” or “Al-Tarfah Al-Khalfiyah”, which means the leg of the tent (figure 1#8 & figure 2 #13), and the pole in the center is called “Amood Al-Amer” (figure 1 #4 & figure 2 #12). Also, each one of the poles that are placed at the four corners of Bait-al-Sha'ar is called “Amood-al-Kiser” (figure 1 #6&8, figure 2 #11&13). However, each one of the other front poles of Bait-al-Sha'ar is called “Amood Al-Medam” (figure 1 #5, figure 2 #11&17); while, each one 2 #13&16). The name of Bait-al-Sha'ar goes after the number of the central poles “Emdan Al-Waset” that support its roof. Thus, if the center is supported by one pole, then it is called



**Figure (3):** A tent divider “Qatta” is used in Bait-al-Sha'ar to separate the men's quarter from the women's quarter.

“Qutbah”. However, if it has two central poles then it is called “Sahwah”. The Bait that has three central poles is called “Metholath”, then one with four central poles is called “Merobaa”, the one with five central poles is called “Mekhomas” (figure 1), the one with six central poles is called “Mesodas”, and the one with seven central poles is called “Mesobaa”. Each pole regardless of its length has two extending pieces of wood called the “Athanee” or ears (figure 2 #5). They are used in the center of the roof of Bait-al-Sha’ar as a place to rest the two short sticks that are sewn to the roof at distances of three (3) meters away from each other and each one of them is called “Qitab” (figure 2 #4). The Qitab is used to protect the roof of Bait-al-Sha’ar from being teared by Awameed Al-Waset (center poles).

**8) Tarrijah or Webbing:** this is long strip of woven material that is 15-20 centimeter in width used to strengthen the roof of Bait-al-Sha’ar against strain of the Bait’s ropes (figure 1 #3 & figure 2 #3). The Tarrijah is woven out of black and white wool and it mainly goes under the roof and extends to both sides of Bait-al-Sha’ar, and under the sets of three poles to support the roof and protect it from fast wear and tear.

**9) Atnab (single is Tinb) tent ropes:** those ropes are made of local plant fibers called “Leef”. These ropes are tied to the tent poles that are placed under the edges of the roof of Bait-al-Sha’ar to help stretching the roof to assemble Bait-al-Sha’ar. These ropes are named after the tent poles that they are tied to. For example, Atnab-al-Majadeem are tied to the front poles (figure 1 #15), while, Atnab-al-Myakheer are tied to the rear poles, and Atnab-al-Kiser or Atnab-al-Kaser are tied to corner poles (figure 1 #9&11). Each Tinb is tied to the roof of Bait-al-Sha’ar through either a wooden or a metal piece called “Retbah” or “Kherb” (figure 1 #10); while the other end of the Tinb is tied to a tent pig called “Watad” or “Minsab” (figure 1 #14) that is hammered into the ground to anchor Bait-al-Sha’ar to the ground. The longest tent ropes “Atnab Al-Majadeem” (figure 1 #15) are tied to the front poles of Bait-al-Sha’ar; while, the shorter ones “Atnab Al-Miakheer” are tied to the rear Bait’s poles. Atnab-al-Amer, as well as “Atnab-al-Kdser” (Atnab-al-Ead and Atnab-al-Rijil) which are placed in the corners are the shortest. Each corner of Bait-al-Sha’ar is tied with two (2) ropes to stabilize the corners (figure 2 # 9&11). To tighten each tinb of Bait-al-Sha’ar, a special metal piece called “Akfah” or “Mashad” (figure 1 #13) is used for that purpose. The way to tighten the Tinb is to tied one end to the Watad, then take the second end through the “Retbah” or “Kherb” and get it through the Akfah as it is shown in figure (1 #3). The Akfa is pulled onto the opposite direction of Bait-al-Sha’ar to tighten the Tinb.

**10) Sheraa or Bab Al-Bait (entrance / exit):** normally the whole front side of Bait-al-Sha’ar is open to welcome the coming gests and help cooling the Bait during the summer, spring, and autumn seasons, however, that side of the Bait is covered with a long wall curtain called the Sitar to help keeping the Bait warm and cozy. Thus, a small opening in the Sitar is made to be the entrance to the Bait and the exit at the same time (figure 1 #16 & figure 2 #18).

**11) Khelal (tiding agent):** The top edges of the soft curtain walls of Bait-al-Sha’ar are tied to inner edges of the roof by using a thin and long metal pen called “Khelal”. Currently, many of the newly made Bait-al-Sha’ar use tiding thin ropes to connect the curtain wall to the edges of the roof (figure 2 #14). The same Khelal technique is also used to tie the corners of Bait-al-Sha’ar, and the entrance/exit of the Bait.

### **Bait-al-Sha'ar's Soft Furniture and Decorations**

To furnish and decorate the mobile home of Bait-al-Sha'ar, Al-Sadu master weavers are amazingly creative in utilizing Al-Sadu weavings to fulfill both purposes. Some of the objects, which they create, are used as floor coverings; while the others are used as bed covers, pillowcases, carrying and storage bags, and many decorative items. The following items are some examples of Bait-al-Sha'ar soft furniture and decorative items:

1. **Besat (area rug):** It is often made of one or to Fijahs sewn together with a thick wool yarn (Figure 4). Warp-face techniques is used in weaving this Besat. Colorful yarns and beautiful geometric patterns are used to enhance the aesthetic appeal of it and add an artistic touch to the Paige color of the desert sand and vibrant colors to the mostly black textiles of Bai-al-Sha'ar. Another type of Besat is made with the Raqoum technique. In this kind of Besat, the vibrant colorful weft yarns are rapped around the warp yarns to create series of colorful triangles of similar sizes to form beautiful diamond shapes or nicely arranged diagonal zigzag lines. The third type of Besats are the ones shown in. These Besats are woven using the plain weave technique, then they are decorated elegantly by sewing beautiful patterns on then with a needle and colorful yarns.
2. **Zoleyah (carpet):** The first look at the Bedouin Zoleyah is similar to most of the same carpet that is known and being sold in the market because it is made with a long pile weave, where the pile would be about 5-7 centimeters in length (Figure 5).
3. **Masnad (pillowcase):** a pillowcase is made of long piece Of Al-Sadu weavings that is folded to the desire size, then it is sewn from three sides. Finally, it get filled with fleece to give it the required fluffiness (Figure 5) and the fourth side get sewn. A normal size pillow measures 50 centimeters in width and 70 centimeters in length and about 30 centimeters in thickness.
4. **Firash or Matrah (mattress):** For resting and sleeping purposes, Bait-al-Sha'ar is furnished with mattresses all around in a U-shape (Figure 6). These mattresses are made of long and wide Al-Sadu weavings, then it get filled up with fleece to be about 10-15 centimeters in thickness with a length of about 2 meters and a width of 70-80 centimeters. The "Shedad" or the camels' saddle is often placed on the mattresses to be used as a Masnad when it is not being used as a saddle.
5. **Mezwadah (shoulder bag):** It is made out of sheep's fleece or camel's hair mainly for men to carry in their light personal belonging and food when traveling across the desert (figure 7). Also, the shepherds use them to carry in their food. The other kind of Mezwadah is made little bigger with two round ends to be placed on the horse or camel's saddle to carry the food of the traveling person who is riding the horse or camel.
6. **Kharj (saddle bag):** This kind of bag is carried around by being attached to the horse of camel's saddles to carry personal belongings and food for the person traveling long distances (figure 8). It is usually beautifully decorated with colorful geometric patterns with short and long hanging tassels, which also become part of the decoration used to enhance the look of the horse of the camel.

7. **Adel (large bag):** This storage bag is made of Al-Sadu weaving (figure 9). It looks just like the saddlebags, yet, it is much larger. It is used to store kitchen dishes and other utensils. In addition, it is used to store rice and other grains. Al-Sadu master weavers are quite creative and thoughtful in using their weaving talents to enhance the aesthetical appeal of their homes of Bait-al-Sha'ar. The decoration items differ based on the natural of the decorated space. Thus, they mainly weave horizontal decorations of different lengths and sizes for their homes. These items are made of long Al-Sadu weaving decorated with beautiful geometric patterns and long fluffy Ahdab (tassels) to decorate the inner soft curtain walls of Bait-al-Sha'ar (figure 5).

### The Construction and Deconstruction Processes of Bait-al-Sha'ar

Although the full construction of Bait-al-Sha'ar is not quite complicated, yet, it has its unique construction procedure. After sewing all the different parts of Bait-al-Sha'ar in their proper places, the roof of Bait-al-Sha'ar is laid on the ground and all its ropes are stretched away from the Bait each in its proper direction. One side of the roof



**Figure (4):** Besat (Runner).



**Figure (5):** A seating arrangement with a Zoleyah on the floor mattress, a Masnad (pillow), three (3) Shedads (camel saddles) to be used as arm resting cochins, and a wall hanging decoration.



**Figure (6):** Firash (Mattress).



**Figure (7):** Mezwadah.



**Figure (8):** Kharj.



**Figure (9):** Adel.

is placed to the north while the other side is placed to the south and the front of Bait-al-Sha'ar faces the east. Next the Bait's pegs (Awtad) are hammered to the ground at reasonable distances from the roof of the Bait and the ropes are tied loosely to the Bait's pegs (Al-Azmee, Hamad, personal communication, July 20, 2017).

Based on the prevailing wind at the time of the construction of Bait-al-Sha'ar, the side that faces the prevailing wind is lifted to benefit from the power of the wind in lifting the rest of the roof. The, short poles are placed under the lifted side of the roof (figure 1), to help later lifting the middle of the roof with taller poles. The rear side of Bait-al-Sha'ar might be lifted up with another set of short poles, and it might be place on the ground. Then, the Rewaqs (soft curtain walls) and the Qatta (tent divider) are in their places and the Bait's ropes are tighten to the required levels of tension. Finally, the Bait is furnished and decorated with proper items and it becomes ready for the inhabitation.

When the time comes for leaving the camp area, the Bait's decoration and furniture are removed. Next, all the removable parts of Bait-al-Sha'ar are dismantled, rapped together in groups, placed on the back of camels, and transferred to the new camping location for a new construction procedure.

## Conclusion

As modern structures, overcome the conventional ones due to the general drastic changes in life, the need increases to preserve and protect conventional structures due to their high traditional and cultural values as vital parts of the history of humankind. As a result, this study bears a special importance to the history of Nomad life in Kuwait, as well as, in the Arabian Peninsula. It is true that this study is not an in-depth detailed study; yet, it has valuable information and details related to the Bedouin mobile home tent of Bait-al-Sha'ar, its soft furniture and decorations. In addition, serious efforts were made to find out the names of the different external and internal hard and soft parts of Bait-al-Sha'ar, its furniture and decorations.

In conclusion, it was found that Bait-al-Sha'ar has a unique compatible structure for living in arid desert areas. Animal fibers such as sheep' fleece, goat's hair, and camel's hair were the main three types of fibers used in constructing Bait-al-Sha'ar. These fibers were due to their availability in good quantities, and because of their excellent insulating and sustainability properties.

## Recommendations

Since the collected data came of different tribal sources, it is recommend that the research continue in:

1. Studying similarities and differences among the different Kuwaiti Bedouin tribes in naming the different external and internal hard and soft parts of Bait-al-Sha'ar, its furniture and decorations.
2. Investigate similarities and differences among the different Kuwaiti Bedouin tribes in structuring, construction, and deconstruction methods of Bait-al-Sha'ar.

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